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## OIS Art Teacher Trains Winning Artists

By Sophie Braccini



Marina Box's winning poster Photo courtesy [www.orindaschools.org](http://www.orindaschools.org)

Bob Murtagh, President of the Moraga Lions Club, believes that Orinda Intermediate School teacher Susan Weiss has a special talent. For two years in a row, the art teacher's class has produced the winning entry in the Lions' Peace Poster contest for Alameda/Contra Costa County. Weiss herself praises the creativity of her students and acknowledges that the concept of the contest, that makes student think creatively about peace, has inspired her. The 2010 County winner was Marina Box, and the 2009 winner was Natalie Vigo.

"The Lions runs a peace poster contest every year in which some 500,000 kids compete all over the world," says Murtagh, " and for the past two years a student from Mrs. Weiss class won in our district - Contra Costa/Alameda. She just seems to be able to motivate her students at a higher level." The whole idea of the competition is to get students to think about peace, its meaning and its symbols. Each year the theme is slightly different, this year it was "vision of peace."

"When the Lions contacted me four years ago I looked at the information they sent," remembers Weiss, "it was something different than what I had done before, and a great opportunity that got the kids excited."

"The beginning of the school year starts with a drawing unit that's 3-4 weeks long. Then I use the contest as the focal point for a long process that builds to it, teaching the use of six different mediums," explains Weiss, "I have them do peace-related things, then they put the poster together. They do sketches, a rough draft, and choose mixed mediums according to the contest's restrictions." This year, she got 60 entries out of a class of 80 7th and 8th graders.

Weiss has a project-oriented approach to teaching art. She has been teaching at Orinda Intermediate (OIS) for 20 years and praises the talent and focus of her students. She believes that the Peace Poster competition stimulates her young students and she plans to continue having her classes participate. The winner of the District level wins \$100 for his/her school and gets a gift certificate.

Both Stanley Middle School and Orinda Intermediate participated in the competition. Stanley's posters can be seen at the Moraga library (the Lafayette library was not available) and the Orinda library displays the OIS posters. The OIS entries can also be seen on Susan Weiss' web page on the school web site, [www.orindaschools.org/ois](http://www.orindaschools.org/ois).

For an international perspective on the competition, go to [lionsclubs.org](http://lionsclubs.org) and check the peace posters finalists. Children from all over the world will amaze you with their creativity.

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